



Nebraska State Rehabilitation Council

500 S. 84th St., 2nd Floor PO Box 94987 • Lincoln, Nebraska 68509-4987

"A consumer-controlled council committed to ensuring quality rehabilitation services."

SRC Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, August 5th, 2025

10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

The meeting minutes of the State Rehabilitation Council commenced at 10:00 by Gloria.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Ashley Altman, Jordyn Brummund, Gloria Eddins, Sharon Elliot, Jason Gieschen, Todd Ludwig, Paulette Monthei, Scott Parrill, Lindy Foley, Tobias Orr, Janel Sweley

MEMBERS ABSENT: Jodi Bodnar, Michael Bursaw, Jana Egan, Christine Gaspari, Matthew Kaslon, Lisa Kent-Scheer, Alvin Parker, Terri Ridder

NEBRASKA VR STAFF PRESENT: Alexa Krueger

NEBRASKA VR STAFF ABSENT: Holly Enriquez, Angela Fujan, Michael Enriquez, Lupe Stevens,

VISITORS: Shari Bahensky, Margie Propp, Ben Sparks

VISITORS NOT ATTENDING: None

I. Pledge of Allegiance (Jason Gieschen)

Gloria lead members in resighting the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. Approval of agenda (Chair)

There was not a quorum, so the agenda was not approved. However, no members vocalized any objections or proposed any changes.

III. Approval of prior meeting minutes (Chair)

The prior May 6th, 2025, meeting minutes were not approved due to lack of quorum.

This item will be tabled until the October 7th SRC Council Meeting.

IV. Robert's Rules, meeting etiquette, and short break hourly (Chair)

Gloria told the Council Robert's Rules are followed during each SRC meeting.

V. Introductions (Chair)

All Council members introduced themselves. Shari Bahensky introduced herself to all Council members. She explained she was filling in for Jodi and works for the Client Assistance Program (CAP).

VI. Council membership (Chair)

A. Potential members: No potential members were mentioned during the meeting.

B. New Members: None

C. 2025 Terms ending:

- First term ending: None
- Second term ending: None
- Recruitment reminder: Individuals with a disability needed.

VII. Action

Follow-up to action items from last meeting:

There was no follow-up action items from last meeting.

Election of Officers: Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Chairs (Tobias)

This item will be tabled until the October 7th, 2025, Council meeting due to lack of quorum.

VIII. Discussion

A. February Senator's Outreach (Sarah)

Sarah recapped the February 4th, 2025, Senator Outreach activity for Council members.

She reminded the Council they can still reach out to their Senators again. She also asked if members would like to receive the Example Email, along with the current list

of Senator's that was sent out to all Council members in February 2025.

Gloria thought this would be a great idea as it wouldn't hurt to reach out again given government employees can't lobby.

Paulette shared she sent out emails to 20 Senators and got positive responses from a handful of Senators. However, she would like to have received even more responses.

Sarah shared with the Council prior to Covid, the SRC used to meet at the Capitol and stop by each the Senator's office to speak with them in-person. However, the logistics of the event were hard to work out. In addition, there was often a low turnout from Council members. It was decided the Council move towards an email approach.

Council members, along with Sarah, thought it would be beneficial to personalize their emails. They mentioned sharing personal stories about the impact VR has had on them or a family member would be a helpful strategy.

Sarah will resend following items to the Council:

- Example Email Communication to State Senators
- Nebraska SRC Annual Report 2023-2024
- In Appreciation of Your Support Constant Contact

B. October Disability, Employment, and Inclusion Awards (Employment Committee)

Todd shared the Employment Committee has been very busy selecting SRC award winners.

He said there were a lot of award nominations submitted and all of them were great quality candidates.

He mentioned the Lieutenant Governor, Joe Kelly will be in attendance on October 6th, 2025, for the SRC Disability Employment and Inclusion Awards Ceremony.

Todd shared the 2025 SRC Disability Employment and Inclusion Award winners and who nominated them:

- Behlen – Nominated by Hannah Miler in Columbus
- Deb Shauer from Kearney Public Schools- Project SEARCH – Nominated by Jodi Petersen in Kearney
- Pizza Ranch in North Platte – Nominated by Cassy Kvasnicka in Kearney
- Pizza Ranch Corporate Headquarters – Nominated by Robert Bradley in

Omaha

- Generations Daycare & Learning Center – Nominated by Tiffany Olds in Scottsbluff

Todd told the Council the Nebraska VR Marketing Team is currently in the process of creating and sending out certificates to the winners of the You Make a Difference Award.

C. Member Feedback on Written Reports (10 minutes each):

1. ATP (Tobias Orr) – See written report.

Tobias shared ATP submitted the Enrichment Foundation Grant for calendar year 2026.

He stated the DHHS Program has been as busy as ever.

He said ATP's Education Program has been doing a lot of training events and their calendar is already filled for 2026.

He mentioned in his report, Brooke Harrie gives a breakdown of information regarding the Nebraska VR Title 1 Program Update.

Tobias said ATP is working hard to make lots of upgrades to their client database and working hard to speed up their processes.

He reported there have been no cuts made at the Federal level.

He shared ATP does have a new federal entity but is still in the process of learning all the details.

2. CAP (Jodi Bodnar) – See written report

Shari shared a few highlights from Jodi's report with Council members. She mentioned there was a National Disability Rights Network (NDRN) Conference.

She said there were a lot of great sessions. She also mentioned Jodi did a presentation during the conference.

Shari did tell Council members there was a concern raised by VR clients regarding clients feeling as though their interactions with VR Staff were impersonal.

Shari shared with the Council Client Assistance Program (CAP) FY26 budget has been zeroed out. However, CAP is a mandated program and must exist if a State operates a Vocational Rehabilitation program, such as Nebraska VR. CAP will continue to receive funding in some way, even if not through the Department of Education, as it has been.

A few Council members mentioned they have received feedback from members in the disability community that CAP could be more responsive when clients call in to ask for assistance with their concerns.

3. Deaf & Hard of Hearing (Ashley Altman) – See written report

Ashley shared the NCDHH's new strategic plan has been approved for 2025-2030. She told the Council they can check out the Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing's website if they are interested in learning more.

She also said LB140 passed which bans the use of certain technologies in K-12 schools starting with the 2025-2026 school year. She told the Council students who need to use technologies to aid in their learning will need to review and update their IEP or section 504 plan.

She said the NCDHH has closed their Equipment Loan Program. They are now referring individuals to Nebraska VR and ATP.

Their North Platte office has closed, but they now have an office in Kearney.

Licenses for interpreters have now been updated. You can find the list of interpreters on their website.

Their Hearing Aid Bank (HAB) has now been transferred to the University of Nebraska- Lincoln's Barkley Center.

4. NSILC (Christine Gaspari)

Tobias shared a brief update on NSILC on Christine's behalf. He told the Council NSILC is still in a period of transition. They are currently looking for new members who will be skilled on getting funding back on track.

5. Ombudsman (report only) – See written report.

Written report only.

6. Youth Leadership Council (report only) – See written report

Paulette mentioned there is an upcoming NYLC meeting. She will be in attendance and see if anyone at the meeting is interested in joining the SRC.

Lindy informed the Council Cathy Loyd will be retiring at end of August 2025. She said this is a part-time position. She told the Council if they know of anyone who would be a good fit for this role to have them apply.

D. Member Feedback on VR (Chair)

Gloria gave a reminder that new membership is needed.

Paulette shared her son is currently in VR's Pre Employment Transition Program. She mentioned that presenters should be well-versed in the types of reasonable accommodations that their services offer so participants know that their needs will be met.

Sharon also shared there seems to be miscommunication in terms of how long people can stay in the Pre Employment Transition Program. She said people are not aware they can stay in the PreETS program until they are 21.

Members agreed there might be a way VR can help work on messaging to eliminate confusion.

E. Director Report (Lindy Foley)

Lindy provided new updates the Council by breaking down information at the Local/State and Federal level.

Local/State Updates: Lindy informed the Council she is currently attending the Region VII Meeting for Nebraska. This will be an in-person conference held on August 5th and 6th, 2025. This meeting provides the opportunity for cross-state collaboration and resource sharing.

Lindy said some of the topics on top of VR's mind are currently Pre-Employment Transition Services, Quality assurance, and Leadership.

Lindy also updated the Council on the Olmstead Plan. She said one of the main goals of this plan is to help make sure communities are accessible. This includes helping citizens with employment, education, and housing. She stated Nebraska VR and ATP are leading the Employment Work Group. They are currently working on creating a 6-year plan. One of their major goals is to make sure this plan will be measurable and consistent.

Lindy mentioned to members they may have seen Nebraska Governor, Jim Pillan's article in mid-July 2025 in the Lincoln Journal Star. This article references the Governor's request to identify Efficiencies.

The messaging of Nebraska VR will play an important role in achieving this request. Lindy reminded the Council for every state dollar Nebraska VR receives; we receive almost \$4.00 in Federal Funding.

Lindy informed the Council in July 2025, Nebraska VR, along with ATP, held an all-staff conference in Kearney, Nebraska. This conference included a variety of internal and external learning sessions for staff to participate in. The Commissioner of the Nebraska Department of Education, Dr. Maher, also spoke at the conference.

Lindy told the Council there were two national speakers in attendance who spoke about their personal experience living with a disability.

Nebraska VR received great feedback from the 215 staff members who attended from across the state.

Lindy also told the Council Deputy Commissioner for the Nebraska Department of Education; Brian Halstead is retiring at the end of August 2025. He has done a great deal of work for Nebraska VR.

Federal Update: Lindy told members she is listening closely to funding conversations. She currently feels confident with Nebraska VR's budget.

Lindy sent an email to the Development and Implementation Group (DIG) on August 1, 2025, regarding the good news from the Senate Appropriations Committee. The Committee passed a bipartisan Labor appropriations bill including statutory language for VR.

Nebraska VR is doing lots of Advocacy work with the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR).

Nebraska VR is looking to participate in a national campaign which would include releasing 100 stories in 100 days on its social media as a part of a CSAVR

initiative. Nebraska VR is already thinking about stories they can share about both their PreETS and adult clients.

IX. Committee meetings and reports:

A. Client Services Committee (Lisa Kent-Scheer)

Due to absences of Council members, this Committee did not have the most current survey available to review. As a result, they chose to focus on the concerns coming into CAP from Nebraska VR Clients.

This Committee thought making sure Nebraska VR staff are employing their Motivational Interviewing training, which could prevent future concerns.

B. Employer Services Committee (Todd Ludwig)

Todd said Michael and Sarah started reaching out to all award winners. He also mentioned the award ceremony will be taking place from 1:00-2:00 p.m. on October 7th, 2025, directly after the SRC Council meeting.

C. Transition Services Committee (Gloria Eddins)

Jordan talked about the 200 plus school districts who are on transition plans. The last data was 74%. However, they are missing groups of people who are 18-years old, but still not ready for employment. One way to ensure this group of people are not left behind, is to start talking to them at a younger age.

They also talked about waiting to have students start project SEARCH at a new time.

The Council thought this would be a great conversation to have with Lupe in a future Council meeting. The Council talked about the potential benefits of creating a PreETS Guidebook.

Tobias informed the Council he would email Lupe about this topic of interest.

D. Executive Committee (Christine Gaspari)

No breakout.

X. Public Comment/Announcements

Gloria shared the next Disability Pride event will be taking place on July 25th, 2026. She told the Council if they are interested in joining the Planning Committee to reach out to her.

Meeting was adjourned.